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ABSTRACT

This report contains the results of a 1970 survey designed to assess the impact of the High School Geography Project (HSGP). Included is a sample of the thinking of those interested in geographic education concerning the direction of future efforts in the field. Questionnaires were sent to approximately 600 members of the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE) and the Association of American Geographers (AAG) and to former trial teachers of the project materials. The results indicated that the overwhelming majority of the responding AAG and NCGE members had heard of the materials, considered them more effective than other means of teaching geography, and intended to use either some of the materials or ideas incorporated from the materials in their classes. The responses from the trial teachers indicated that the majority are still using the materials and consider them more effective compared to other social studies or geography materials. Characteristic and unedited suggestions of AAG members, NCGE members, and trial teachers for work that should be done in geographic education in the 1970s are included. Selected responses of trial teachers in how the materials influenced the way they teach are also presented. (Author/DE)

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HSGP
Boulder, Colo.
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TO: Steering Committee

FROM: Robert Richburg

SUBJECT: An Assessment of the Impact of HSGP

In recent weeks the Project staff has initiated a survey of opinions of individuals interested in geographic education. The purpose of the survey is twofold: 1)to assess the impact of HSGP and, 2)to sample the thinking of this community concerning the direction of future efforts in the field.

This survey has taken several forms. Personal letters soliciting generalized impressions of the Project's significance were sent to former staff, Steering Committee members and unit authors. All former trial teachers were contacted with a questionnaire to determine their impressions of the Geography in an Urban Age course and the ways that participation in the Project has influenced their teaching. Questionnaires were also sent to a sampling of the AAG and NCGE membership in order to determine the degree of familiarity these groups have with HSGP materials, and to ascertain their impressions of the materials.

Additionally, representatives from The Macmillan Company have been contacted concerning the volume of sales of the course units that have already been made and the prospects for sales in the near future. Finally, editors of publications that have an educational interest were queried about their knowledge and impression of the Project and the materials it has produced.

While all of the data from the survey is not available at this time, the responses to the questionnaires to the AAG, NCGE and trial teachers have been summarized. Because this assessment will be an agenda item at the Steering Committee meeting, no interpretations of this data have been attempted. Presumably any portions of this data used in a final report would include interpretive comments.

The Results of the Questionnaire to the NCGE and AAG Memberships

The staff sampled every tenth name from both the NCGE and AAG membership lists. A three-page questionnaire that allowed both open-ended and objective responses was then sent to approximately 600 people on each mailing list. Approximately 38 per cent of the questionnaires were returned from the NCGE and about 25 per cent were returned from the AAG. Of those from the NCGE

membership that returned questionnaires, 9 per cent were elementary school teachers, 33 per cent secondary school teachers, 45 per cent college instructors, and 13 per cent were employed in other capacities. As would be anticipated, the AAG questionnaires returned showed a greater percentage of college instructors. Only 3 per cent of the returning questionnaires from the AAG came from elementary school teachers, 8 per cent came from secondary school teachers, 55 per cent came from college instructors, 12 per cent from government, and 22 per cent otherwise employed. The responses to the objective questions on these questionnaires are summarized below.

"What sort of contact have you had with HSGP materials?"

		Responses	
		AAG	NCGE
A.	I know nothing about the HSGP materials.	7%	13%
B.	I have only heard about the materials.	39%	26%
C.	I have looked at some of the unit materials.	41%	42%
D.	I have taught some of the activities or units.	12%	18%

"If you have had some contact with the materials, how effective would you judge them to be in comparison to existing means of teaching geography?"

		Responses	
		AAG	NCGE
A.	HSGP materials are much less effective than existing materials.	1%	---
B.	HSGP materials are somewhat less effective.	---	1%
C.	HSGP materials are about as effective.	4%	5%
D.	HSGP materials are somewhat more effective.	45%	48%
E.	HSGP materials are much more effective.	49%	46%

"If you are or will be teaching, do you intend to use any parts of HSGP materials in your classes?"

AAG Members' Response		NCGE Members' Response
39%	yes	48%
18%	no	19%
42%	question not appropriate to my situation	33%

"If you are or will be teaching, do you intend to use the ideas incorporated in the HSGP materials in your classes?"

AAG Members' Response		NCGE Members' Response
55%	yes	62%
10%	no	4%
34%	question not appropriate to my situation	33%

In order to ascertain how AAG and NCGE members who are familiar with HSGP materials would characterize them, a semantic differential instrument was included in the questionnaire. The results of this instrument for these two groups along with the results for the trial teachers are graphically summarized on page 9.

Finally, the sampled membership of NCGE and AAG were asked to offer suggestions of work in geographic education that should be done in the 1970's. Characteristic and unedited responses are included below. Because of the diversity of the suggestions made by the NCGE membership, it seemed useful to divide the responses into two categories according to the level at which the respondents teach.

Representative Suggestions for Work That Should Be Done in Geographic Education in the 1970's

AAG Respondents

The most important objective of the 1970's should be state certification of geography teachers and better training of those teachers.

Dissemination of this project's work on as wide a basis as possible, especially contents and abstracts of prepared materials, games, films, etc., and means of gaining access to these materials.

A. Recreation geography: for better utilization of the increasing amounts of leisure time
B. International geography: for a better understanding of world international political and military policies

Development of college-level introductory courses and materials--especially important as so many students at this level are taught by relatively inexperienced instructors.

Provide closer ties between college and university departments of geography and the public schools where geography is taught.

1) Continue the High School Geography Project.
2) Institute an Elementary School Geography Project.
3) Create more Summer Institutes to train teachers in the use of your materials and other materials.
4) Develop a new world regional or North American-South American unit.
5) Distribute more information about the units completed - !

1. Stress the spatial aspects of environmental contamination, urban ghettoes, poverty, etc.
2. More basic research in learning theory, methods, map-reading development, and spatial perception among children using geography as the substantive content. (Very few geographers are either interested or competent in this area.)
3. Change the content from encyclopedic factual trivia to the main ideas.
4. Stop teaching earth studies as physical geography and concentrate on geography as the study of human spatial patterns.

I feel we should turn our emphasis to the massive environmental problems which face our nation and the world. Geographers possess much of the expertise necessary to deal with such problems. Materials are badly needed.

Develope parallel course on a regional basis.

With the current emphasis being placed on the earth and the crisis of the earth environment, it might be well to include units on resource planning, conservation, etc.

NCGE - Public School Oriented Respondents

This is the best yet, by far, but don't stop here. I still think a little more on regions would be good. (The kids still want to talk about Russia or Africa, and the teachers could use some guidance.)

Suggest material dealing with principles and fundamentals of geography--handled in a more direct manner.

More emphasis on applied geography--how is it being used in the "real" world? Practical application with exercises involving student in possible solutions to current problems.

Geographic education should get on the ecology bandwagon and help bring about an understanding of our environment in our young people. We have only a few decades left in order to save our world!

Train more geography teachers for the classroom; too many social studies teachers teaching a geography course. Reduce material costs of the HSGP so the normal school district can afford the program. More HSGP Summer Institutes to train teachers in making the HSGP an effective program.

Extension of curricula effort to include additional topics. Example--geomorphology--glaciation--cultural studies of underdeveloped--developing and developed societies--U.S. demography.

More emphasis on teacher education and teacher education programs that are available to everyone. I find many teachers won't use HSGP materials because they are unfamiliar with the process.

Project work should begin for the junior high students (grades 7-8-9) immediately! Students are demanding that courses in geography become relevant to them. Emphasize the place of a geographer in our society by getting students to become active in doing what a geographer does. Design material for the junior high student or the majority will lose interest before high school or college.

Less expensive materials with the same quality as HSGP! I would like very much to teach more of the HSGP, however cost prohibits such.

NCGE - College Oriented Respondents

Ecological considerations in man's use of the environment, like; What does man do to the earth when he changes invironments so drastically.

Get back to fundamentals and stop playing games. They're a lot smarter than you think and they want the straight facts.

Get perception, behavioralism, environmental quality, and other new topics introduced--but more important, to change the stereotype most people and teachers have of geography--getting HSGP and other new materials introduced will help--so will improvement of college instruction.

Help to keep alive the current concern over environment by developing units on conservation, pollution, population, etc.

Greater effort ought to be made in encouraging curriculum developers and public school teachers to use HSGP materials.

Greater emphasis on human behavior in a spatial context and implications of that behavior in the broader framework of society.

Provide extensive institutes and workshops that involve and include administrators, curriculum consultants, principals, teachers of education courses as well as teachers. These might be sponsored by colleges and geographers familiar with the work. The material is so innovative that many traditional educators and teachers are afraid of the changes.

More work in academically sophisticated filmstrips in regional and cultural geography. So many insult the social sciences when compared to those teaching aids in the sciences.

Effective, meaningful ways to put across message of doing something about the quality of the environment.

Greater cooperation and coordination between teachers of geography at all levels, Ph.D. to early elementary. The value of our discipline to contemporary society could better be shown if a consistent view of the field emerged. And I would like to know what my colleagues at other levels are doing, especially in the areas I also teach.

1) Geographic aspects of planning for social change.
2) The formation and dynamics of the ghetto.
3) Social geography, behavior, and urbanization.
4) Quantitative tools in geography--to be coordinated with advanced placement classes in high school math.

If the results are to be for the majority, devise a presentation which does not follow the totally unrealistic prices (commercial) of the finished product as is the case now. How many boards of education will pay $1,000 for the set or purchase only a "part" of something? Be realistic!

More attention should be focused upon regional geography and how one can look at areas wholistically. I recognize that systematic (topical) approaches are scientifically more valid, but they should be limited insofar as they help young students to understand the character of places (broad areas). Much systematic material can be approached within a regional structure.

Results of the Questionnaire to HSGP Trial Teachers

A somewhat shorter questionnaire was sent to all the Project's former trial teachers. Of the 130 questionnaires sent out, 45 per cent were returned. Sixty-four per cent of the trial teacher respondents are presently teaching primarily geography, 14 per cent are presently teaching mostly world or American history and 22 per cent some other course in the social sciences. The per cent presently teaching geography is unexpectedly high since the per cent of geography oriented teachers during our trials has never exceeded about 30 per cent.

The remainder of the results for the questionnaire are summarized below.

"Are you presently using HSGP materials in your classes?"

77% yes
15% no
8% not teaching anymore

"Do you intend to use the commercial edition of the materials in your classes?"

52% definitely "yes"
27% yes <u>if</u> the district has the money
13% no
8% not teaching anymore

"From your experience with HSGP materials, how effective would you judge them to be in comparison to other social studies or geography materials?"

	Responses
A. HSGP materials are much less effective	2%
B. HSGP materials are somewhat less effective	5%
C. HSGP materials are about as effective	5%
D. HSGP materials are somewhat more effective	31%
E. HSGP materials are much more effective	56%

. . . . .

"In what way, if any, have the ideas or materials of the High School Geography Project influenced either what or the way you teach?"

Selected responses:

Teaching it was sort of a "peak experience." It would be hard to go back to face turned-off kids. It would either make me work like hell at teaching or make me feel guilty that I didn't.

Not at all.

Developed a real awareness of what the student is doing as opposed to what I was teaching - encourage simulation, role-playing, and games in general.

These materials have suggested new ways of organizing materials and evaluating instruction.

I am now teaching more concepts and less factual information.

It makes my classes more activity-oriented. Provides the lower achiever with a chance to "participate."

After four years of contact with the HSGP materials, I find that I must force myself to present periodically an interesting lecture. During about 85 to 90 per cent of my teaching, I use the inquiry method. Not only I, but my entire Social Studies Department, has accepted the method and are very pleased with the results.

It has taken me away from the role of know-all to that of one-to-one relationship with my students.

It has certainly made me a much more inquiry-oriented teacher, and the techniques have suggested a number of methods I have been able to utilize in all my courses.

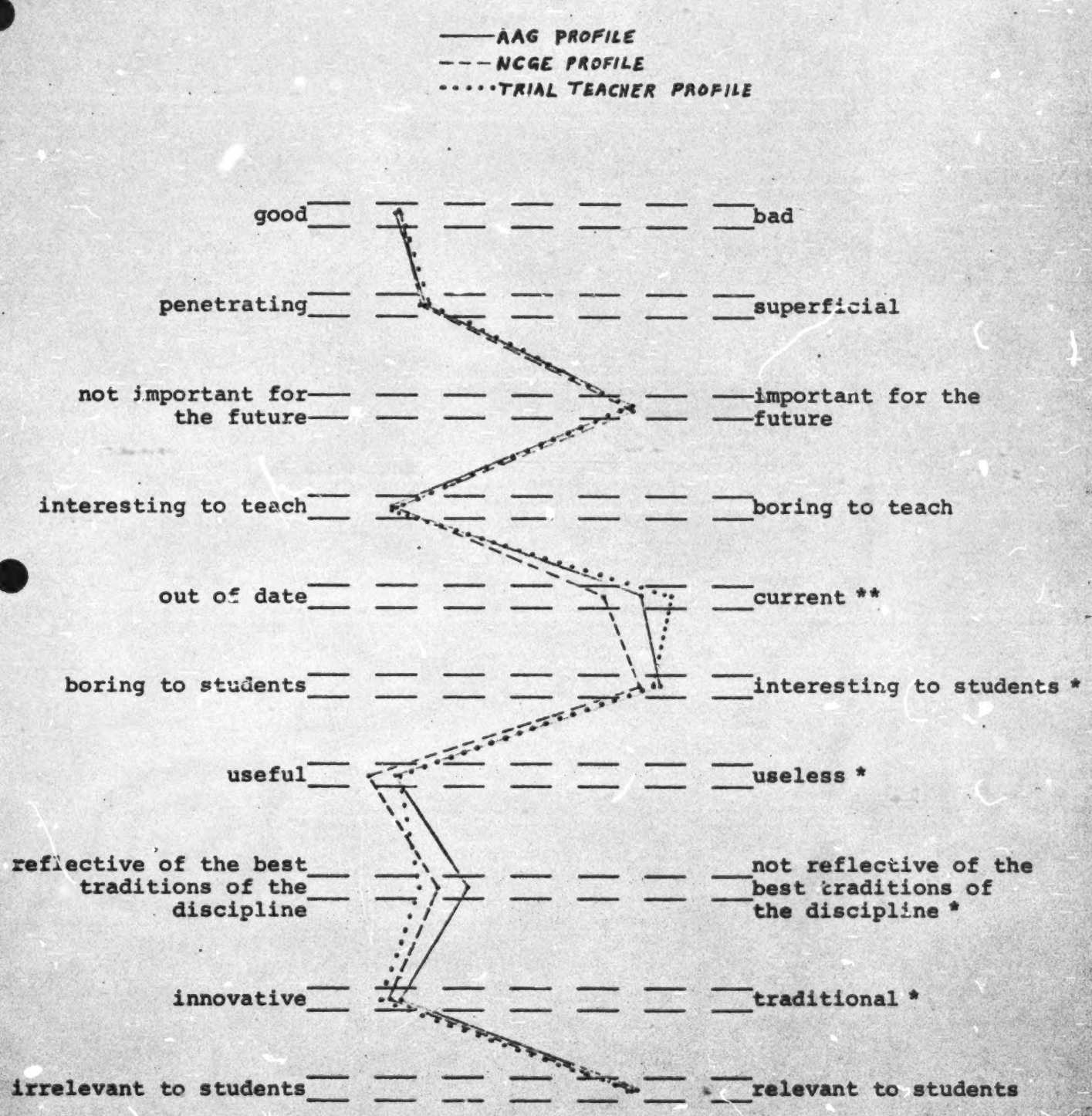
I have developed many of my own units which emphasize the inquiry approach.

. . . . .

"Would you indicate your impressions of HSGP materials on the following instrument."

(AAG and NCGE profiles are shown as well as the trial teachers' for comparison purposes.)

HSGP Course Materials



** means differ significantly at .01 level

* means differ significantly at .05 level

"What suggestions would you offer for work that should be done in geographic education in the 1970's?"

Selected responses:

I would like to see more in the area of teacher education. I was impressed with the Teacher Education Field Trials very much.

If this type of material and teaching were used in college introductory courses, the whole field would improve. Teachers tend to teach as they have been taught; I know, I teach the introductory courses.

If you (AAG) don't do something significant in the field of teacher education and show some genuine concern for a balance between the teaching (as opposed to research) in the universities, geography is going to become a forgotten discipline.

Suggest encouraging more specific geographic study in primary and junior high levels to prepare the students better for the use of the High School Project materials.

More teacher training programs - more resource units.

Start working into or relating to the present interest in environmental education.

I feel a definite need in the area of population case studies. Case studies of areas that have experienced rapid population growth and the resultant change in life style, social and political structure, and impact on the land and its resources would be extremely valuable. There is also a greater need for implementing population education/environment materials.

A greater liasion between the professional geographer at the university and college level and the geography teacher at the secondary level. At present, there appears to be little encouragement or concern.

More lobbying should be done for Federal money in this area for additional projects like HSGP and for follow-up college institutes and independent NDEA Institutes in Geography.